

Guide to Service Animals in Public Places



City of Seattle Office for Civil Rights

Federal, state and local laws require that places normally open to the public must allow trained service animals to accompany people with disabilities onto the premises.

This includes businesses, agencies, government offices, health clinics, etc.

WHAT IS A SERVICE ANIMAL?

A service animal is any animal that has been trained to perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. Under the law, a service animal is not considered a pet. Dogs are the most common service animals but other species (cats, birds etc.) also can be service animals.

Service animals can perform many types of tasks for someone with a disability.



Guide dogs are used by people with visual impairments. Other service animals are trained to alert a deaf person to sounds, to alert an individual with seizure disorder to an oncoming seizure, to carry and pick up things for someone who uses a wheelchair, or to help with balance.

There are no legal requirements for service animals to be specifically identified. Some (but not all) service animals wear special collars and harness. Some (but not all) are licensed or “certified” and/or have identification papers.

“No-pets” policies do not apply to service animals. You must make an exception for them.

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RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUSINESSES

- **Businesses cannot require a person with a disability to show proof of a disability or certification of a service animal's status.**
You may ask a person with an animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability, if you are not certain that an animal is a service animal.
- **Businesses cannot restrict the areas where a service animal can go.** A service animal must be allowed to accompany a person with a disability everywhere that other people normally are allowed to go, unless the animal's presence creates a basic change to your business operation or threat to safety.
- **Businesses cannot restrict access to service animals because of health regulations.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) takes priority over local or state laws or regulations.
- **Businesses are not responsible for a service animal while a person with a disability is on the premises.** Care or supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of the animal's owner.
- **Businesses may exclude a service animal from your premises when its behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.** Businesses do not have to accommodate a service animal when doing so would result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the business.

For more information:

**Seattle Office
for Civil Rights**

206-684-4500



www.seattle.gov/civilrights

Information will be provided in alternate formats to people with disabilities upon request

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